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**CHEVY CHASE VILLAGE  
BOARD OF MANAGERS  
MAY 14, 2012 MEETING**

**STAFF REPORT**

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**TO:** BOARD OF MANAGERS  
**FROM:** SHANA R. DAVIS-COOK, VILLAGE MANAGER   
**CC:** MICHAEL YOUNES, DIRECTOR OF MUNICIPAL OPERATIONS  
**DATE:** 5/10/2012  
**SUBJECT:** STATUS OF THE CONNECTICUT AVENUE MEDIAN

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**Concern**

The median strip along Connecticut Avenue has been neglected for the past several years. With the economic decline, the State Highway Administration (SHA)—under whose jurisdiction this area falls—has claimed that it has fewer resources available to properly maintain this area.

The median is only twelve (12) inches wide (inside the curbs). The area is constantly barraged with roadway chemicals, including oil and snow melt. The area has been landscaped in the past, but SHA claims that it is essentially impossible for any plant material, including sod, to thrive under these conditions and that maintenance of the area poses safety concerns for its workers due to the narrow median and the adjoining narrow travel lanes.

**Background**

In July 2010, I hosted a meeting with officials from SHA's landscape department and managers from the neighboring municipalities. The goal of this meeting was to bring the condition of the median to SHA's attention and to discuss a project plan for a long-term sustainable solution and ensure routine maintenance by SHA. During the meeting SHA's landscape consultant indicated that there were available funds to either modestly landscape or install handsome pavers as a "hardscape" solution. The staff presented these ideas to SHA officials who determined that the cost exceeded available funds and that any improvements plans would need to be put on-hold. Since that meeting SHA has been investigating options within its Landscape Design Division and Office of Environmental Design that will survive while limiting the amount of routine maintenance.

Due to lack of attention by SHA, the Village has been forced to take interim actions to address this area. Each growing season over the past three years, I have authorized our landscape maintenance contractor to mow the area down, which is rife with weeds.

The elected bodies at our immediately northern municipalities in the Village of Chevy Chase, Section 3 and at the Town of Chevy Chase have taken a position on how they would like to see their portion of the median addressed. The Town would like to see a hardscape solution, such as decorative pavers, thereby eliminating the ongoing maintenance concern. Section 3, however, strongly supports the installation of a variety of hardy landscaping.

**Recent Proposal from SHA**

On April 20, 2012, SHA District 3 engineer Mr. Brian Young contacted the municipalities along Connecticut Avenue to advise that SHA has now approved funding for the installation of decorative concrete pavers along the entire length of the median between East West Highway and Chevy Chase Circle. SHA will work with the neighboring municipalities to determine the final treatment that is used and has requested feedback from each municipality on this proposal.

**Staff Recommendation**

I highly recommend that we support SHA's current proposal to install decorative concrete pavers for the following reasons:

1. Aesthetics: the current median is unbecoming of this area and is nothing short of an "eyesore". We would work with SHA to determine a visually appealing paver design and/or we could request that SHA uses the same brick material currently being installed in sidewalks throughout the Village<sup>1</sup>.
2. Public safety: currently the weeds in the median grow so high that they prevent a safe refuge for pedestrians daring to cross Connecticut Avenue. The weeds also create a sightline obstruction for motorists.
3. Maintenance: as I stated above, we have taken over the maintenance of this area during the past couple of years due to inaction by SHA. Maintenance of this area is a safety concern for our contractor due to the limited space in which to work and the proximal traffic.

**Board Action Requested**

The Board's position in response to SHA's proposal is requested. The Board can either:

- a. Agree to support SHA's proposal to install concrete pavers in the Connecticut Avenue median
- b. Agree to support a hardscape solution for the Connecticut Avenue median, but in another material, specifically the *Pine Hall Pathway Full Range Clay Brick* pavers currently being installed throughout the Village under our Sidewalk Replacement Capital Project.
- c. Object SHA's proposal and instead urge them to install landscaping in the Connecticut Avenue median.

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<sup>1</sup> As the Board may recall, at Village staff request last year the State Highway Administration agreed to install the *Pine Hall Pathway Full Range Clay Brick* pavers when it replaced the sidewalks along Connecticut Avenue.